



The Beginning of the Age of Kali-yuga

According to the Vedic prophecies, the rapid deterioration in society and in the earth's environment does not take place until the age of Kali-yuga. But Kali-yuga is not an age of the future. Kali-yuga began 5,000 years ago. Thus, the decline is already in progress.

There are four ages or *yugas*. Descriptions of the length of these ages are found in the *Bhagavad-gita* (8.17), the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (3.11.19), the *Vana Parva* section of the *Mahabharata*, and other places. It is described that Kali-yuga lasts 432,000 years, of which we have already passed through 5,000. Prior to Kali-yuga was the age of

Dvapara-yuga, lasting 800,000 years. Before that was Treta-yuga, lasting 1,200,000 years. Before that age was the age of Satya-yuga, which lasted 1,728,000 years.

Descriptions of the characteristics of each age are found in many *Puranas*. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (starting at 12.3.18) states that in Satya-yuga there is virtue, wisdom, and religion, with no ignorance or vice. People are full of truthfulness, mercy, austerity, and charity. These are the four legs of religion and the universal aspects of pious life as found in any true spiritual process. The people of Satya-yuga are self-satisfied, friendly, peaceful, sober, and tolerant. Their pleasure is found within themselves, not through gratifying their senses in external activities. They know their spiritual identity and live in harmony with God, nature, and each other. They see things equally and continually work to attain spiritual perfection. People in Satya-yuga, living in this mode of goodness, could live to be 100,000 years old.

The *Narada Purana* (1.41.7-11) elaborates on the conditions of Satya or Krita-yuga. In Krita-yuga there were no separate [species of demigods and demonic on Earth, such as] Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, or serpents. All were as good as Devas. All were always full of delight and righteousness. There was neither buying nor selling. There were no different classifications of the *Vedas*. All classes of people were interested in their respective duties and conduct of life. There was only one Deity, Lord Narayana, and the people were always engrossed in penance and meditation and devotion to Narayana. They were free from lust and other defects and were endowed with qualities such as self-control. Their minds were engaged in seeking the means of *dharma* [spiritual merit], and they were without envy, jealousy, arrogance, or hypocrisy. All were truthful and richly endowed with Vedic knowledge. They practiced the proper holy rites for their stage of life.

The *Kurma Purana* (1.29.14-17) goes on to say that in Satya-yuga the birth of people was through spiritually sanctioned methods so everyone was born with a highly developed consciousness. All livelihoods were without greed. The citizens were always content and had all pleasures and enjoyments. They were without distinctions and, therefore, without inferiority or superiority. They had equal longevity and beauty, were free from grief, and practiced adherence to truth, meditation, and penance. They were always delighted in their minds.

The *Padma Purana* (7.26.2-5) also states that people in Satya-yuga were all devoted to the worship of Vishnu and were free from grief and disease. All were truthful, kind, and lived long. They were all rich in wealth and grains. They did no harm to other beings and were free from religious hypocrisy. No one practiced unrighteousness.

Continuing with the descriptions in the *Bhagavatam* (from 12.3.20), it states that in the next age of Treta-yuga there is a 25 percent reduction in religion and vice appears. The influence of irreligion is felt through the introduction of lying, violence, dissatisfaction, and quarrel. This increases as people begin to lose touch with their spiritual identity. In Treta-yuga people are devoted to the performance of rituals and severe austerities for both spiritual and economic gain. They attain prosperity by following the instructions of the three *Vedas*. People are not so violent or lusty for sensual pleasure. However, this is the age when they perceive the divisions of social classes as *brahmanas* (spiritual scholars and priests), *kshatriyas* (administrators and warriors), *vaishyas* (merchants, bankers, and farmers), and *shudras* (common laborers). People of Treta-yuga could live for 10,000 years.

The *Padma Purana* (7.26.6-9) also says that in Treta-yuga unhappiness appeared and affected some people. Most people were kind and engaged in the worship of Vishnu. They were happy and had a composed mind. They all followed the religious stages of human life. The *brahmanas* mastered the *Vedas*, were noble and true to their words. They always engaged in penances and vows, had control over their senses, and were averse to accepting charity or gifts.

In Dvapara-yuga, the *Bhagavatam* states that there is another 25 percent reduction in religion, virtue, and spiritual values, with an increase in vice. People are interested in fame, glory, and nobility. They are opulent, have large families, enjoy life, and engage in the study of the *Vedas*. People could live for 1000 years.

The *Padma Purana* (7.26.10-13) says that when Dvapara-yuga arrived, some men were pious while others were engrossed in sins. Some were happy and others were extremely unhappy. Kings began to harass their subjects due to greed for wealth.

The *Vayu Purana* (58.24-25) also explains that in Dvapara-yuga difference of opinion begins among men and life becomes arduous, involving bodily strain. Covetousness, war, diseases, slaughter, breakdowns in social rules and systems, and passion and hatred grow.

Finally, in Kali-yuga, as explained in the *Bhagavatam*, there is a continued decrease in virtue until at the end it will practically disappear. In fact, the ever-increasing presence of impiety reduces all religious principles to nil. This also paves the way for an increase of strife, vice, ignorance, and all sorts of irreligious activities. Life becomes more and more difficult and is especially dangerous for those interested in spiritual realization because there are so many false paths that provide no real truth. Gradually, in the age of Kali, spirituality becomes nothing more than a vague form of Buddhism. Because of all the strife, problems, and wickedness, people in Kali-yuga are lucky to live up to 100 years of age. At the end of Kali-yuga, Satya-yuga begins again after the appearance of Lord Kalki who destroys all of the miscreant kings, thus paving the way for a new age of enlightenment.

The *Padma Purana* (7.26.15-17) elaborates that in Kali-yuga, which is the abode of sins, everyone is involved in sinful activities. They censure the *Vedas*, or spiritual truths, and engage in gambling and stealing. *Brahmanas* will act fraudently for a livelihood. Everyone will be addicted to women, sex, and intoxicating liquors. They will be stealing others' wealth. Heretics and atheists will become prominent. Also (3.7.13-14), men born in Kali-yuga will possess little luster and will be wrathful, greedy, untruthful, and be filled with jealousy, pride, anger, deceit, and malice.

The time period of the four yugas together is called a cycle, which lasts 4,160,000 years. At the end of Kali-yuga, Lord Kalki appears to start a new age of Satya-yuga. Then the pattern of the four ages-Satya-yuga, Treta-yuga, Dvapara-yuga, and Kali-yuga-begins again. When these four yugas repeat a thousand cycles, it is called a *kalpa*, or a day of Brahma. The same length of time comprises Brahma's night when there is a partial annihilation of the universe. After the end of Brahma's night, the creation of the cosmos begins again and the repetitions of the four *yugas* go on for another 1000 cycles, or another kalpa. Lord Brahma lives for 100 years, and each year consists of 365 of such days and nights. Thus, such a lifetime goes on for 311 trillion and 40 million years by earth standards. And Lord Krishna appears in this world once in every 24 hours of Lord Brahma, or approximately every 8,320,000,000 years.

It is agreed by many Vedic scholars that the present age of Kali-yuga began just before the disappearance of Lord Krishna 5,000 years ago. But due to the Lord's presence, the influence of Kali-yuga was held off. However, when Lord Krishna left this world, the effects of Kali-yuga

could no longer be stifled. This is confirmed in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (12.2.29-33) and in the *Vishnu Purana* (Book Four, Chapter 24) which also explains that Kali-yuga comprises 1200 years of the demigods, or 432,000 earth years. Thus, it is generally accepted that the age of Kali-yuga began on February 20, 3102 B.C.

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